

Collins statement on constitutional ground for impeachment hearing

"If presidents can be impeached for partisan policy differences based on presumptions and feelings, not actual evidence, Democrats have profoundly undermined the precedents of this institution."

"Democrats' miserable record and utter lack of fundamental fairness will doom any articles referred to the Senate, but immense damage will already have been inflicted upon the American people and our political system."

"Through this exercise, the American electorate has witnessed Washington's entrenched political and media elites attempt to overturn their will. Next time we go to the polls, the people will ask, 'When we exercise our vote next, will our choice again be attacked by the elites and the permanent government?'"

WASHINGTON — Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.), Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, made the following opening statement at the Judiciary Committee hearing on the constitutional grounds for impeachment.

Below are the remarks as prepared.

Ranking Member Collins: Thank you, Chairman Nadler. Welcome to Part Two of the Schiff impeachment show. Grab your popcorn, because today we have a rerun of the same hearing we already had in this committee in July. On July 12, we had a hearing with a panel of academics to talk about the constitutional standard for impeachment. I guess Chairman Schiff and Speaker Pelosi didn't like the results the first time, so here we are again.

Just like on July 12, what today's hearing is really about is that Democrats have not come to terms with losing the 2016 election to President Trump. This hearing is part of the relentless effort — since the day President Trump took the oath of office — to overturn the will of the American electorate.

Impeaching the American Voter from the Beginning:

In 2016, the American people had the audacity to elect, in Democrats' eyes, the wrong person as president. That is the entire reason we are here. Democrats, and their allies in the media and the permanent federal bureaucracy, are furious at the American people. They cannot abide as president a man who promised American voters he would shake up Washington. The man who said he would work for them — the Forgotten Man and Woman — not the entrenched political elites.

Just 19 minutes after noon on Inauguration Day, 2017, the Washington Post ran the headline: “The Campaign to Impeach President Trump Has Begun.” Mark Zaid, who would later become the attorney for the infamous whistleblower, tweeted in January 2017 that a “coup has started,” and that “impeachment will follow ultimately.” In May of this year, Representative Al Green said, “If we don’t impeach the president, he will get reelected.” It appears that Representative Green won the argument within the Democratic caucus.

Democrats on this committee, under the chairman’s leadership, have been dead-set on impeachment since at least November 2018 — when Chairman Nadler was overheard on an Acela train saying he was “all-in” on impeachment.

Lack of Fairness

The last time this committee considered impeaching a president in 1998, Democratic leaders, including Chairman Nadler, insisted the president deserves the presumption of innocence, the right to confront witnesses, and “due process quadrupled.”

Have Democrats lived up to that standard? Not even close. Today marks the first time the president’s lawyers have been invited to participate, but, rather than asking questions of fact witnesses, the president’s counsel gets to question law professors. I don’t think that meets Democrats’ standard of “due process quadrupled.”

To Democrats, this is a trial when it needs to be a trial, and a show when it needs to be a show. Witnesses are allowed only when selected by Chairman Schiff to further the impeachment story and ignored when they do not. This unfair process is politics as usual, but this time it’s politics to overturn 63 million American votes.

Chairman Schiff’s Parody Call:

On September 26, Chairman Adam Schiff kicked off these hearings by reading a fake phone call, in which he said President Trump told President Zelensky:

“I want you to make up dirt on my political opponent. Understand? Lots of it on this and on that.”

Of course, that is not what President Trump said. Instead, the president asked for backward looking investigations — as Ambassador Volker and other career diplomats testified — into the 2016 election and Burisma, a corrupt company.

The Hypocrisy of this Exercise:

Before we discuss the call that gave rise to this sham impeachment, let’s go back in time to

2015, when the media started asking questions about Hunter Biden's position on the board of Burisma.

In 2015, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* editorialized: "Unfortunately, Mr. Biden's anti-corruption message is undercut by the fact that his son, attorney Hunter Biden, is on the board of directors of Ukrainian gas firm Burisma Holdings Ltd." The editorial notes Burisma was led by an individual under criminal investigation. It further said while the vice president is not responsible for his son's business dealings, "it's not clear what his son brings to Burisma other than his father's name." The vice president himself admitted to meddling in Ukrainian affairs in a manner that, whether intentional or not, may have benefitted his son's corrupt company, Burisma.

Since that time, numerous media outlets have raised questions about the propriety of Hunter Biden's involvement with Burisma, including ABC News and others earlier this year.

This brings us to July and President Trump's phone call with President Zelensky. The call is viewed through each witness's partisan lens, but let's address the facts not in dispute.

Facts Not in Dispute:

When you look at the facts — not the presumptions, feelings and hearsay on display at the Intelligence Committee — there are several facts all witnesses agree upon.

First, President Donald Trump is generally skeptical of foreign aid. America has long been the world's bank, bailing out troubled countries even when they criticize us. Central to this inquiry is a policy disagreement — a longstanding Republican/Democrat disagreement. If we polled my friends on the Agriculture Committee, Republicans would tell you they support giving commodities to foreign countries as opposed to cold hard cash. Democrats, as in the Obama Administration, prefer to give foreign countries cash. Under this rubric, with regard to Ukraine, it makes sense that President Trump's administration would endorse providing Javelins, the anti-tank weapons, over difficult-to-track and easy-to-steal cash.

Second, witnesses also agreed that President Trump had a deeply held belief that Ukraine is a corrupt country. The evidence shows this is not only reasonable, but accurate. We are talking about massive corruption where government officials are also oligarchs, controlling business and lining their pockets with Ukrainian — and American — taxpayer dollars.

Third, zero witnesses identified a crime here. In fact, as the AP pointed out in a November 21 piece, zero witnesses personally attested the president conditioned aid on an announcement of investigations or actual investigations being conducted.

Mr. Ratcliffe asked Ambassador Taylor and Deputy Assistant Secretary Kent if "they could

assert evidence of an impeachable offense.” Neither witness had any such evidence. Ambassador Yovanovitch was asked if she had evidence of the president soliciting or accepting a bribe and she said no. Lt. Col. Vindman and Jennifer Williams also said they had not used the word “bribery” to describe the president’s conduct. Ambassador Volker and Tim Morrison also said they saw no bribery, extortion or *quid pro quo*.

During a phone conversation at the end of August, Senator Johnson specifically asked the president whether there was some action Ukraine could take to lift the hold. The president responded with this quote: “No way. I would never do that. Who told you that?”

Then you have Ambassador Sondland’s conversation with the president — a call Sondland conveniently omitted from his opening statement, in favor of his presumptions. In that conversation, the president said, “I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing.”

Finally, all the witnesses seem to agree at the end of the day, this is a policy disagreement. Lt. Colonel Vindman dramatically told the Intelligence Committee that the July 25 call was “inappropriate” and “my worst fear of how our Ukraine policy could play out.” From the perspective of Dr. Hill, Kent, Taylor and Holmes, the president’s July 25 call was “not in line with American national security goals.”

American foreign policy goals, however, are not set by diplomats. It is the American people, through their elected officials, who determine how we conduct foreign relations. Certainly, career government officials care deeply for their country, and we are grateful for their service, but the American people chose President Trump to set foreign policy.

However, to Democrats, all foreign policy decisions, especially those by this president, are potentially impeachable. Would that thinking extend to circumstances where a prior president told a Russian leader he would have “more flexibility” after the election? Surely our founders would have rejected that notion, and every Congress up until these sham proceedings has done the same.

If you Support POTUS you have a Different View:

Even the witnesses Chairman Schiff selected to testify did not buy what he was selling. Many of the witnesses, including Ambassador Volker, as well as millions of American voters who support President Trump, have a different view of these events and are refusing to buy into the Democrat palace intrigue. The voters see the hypocrisy in this sham impeachment. There are significant weaknesses in the case Chairman Schiff has quickly cobbled together, which represent marked differences from prior impeachments.

One profound difference is this is the first impeachment where the key facts are disputed. With

Nixon, we had the tapes. With Clinton, we had his testimony. In both instances, the facts were investigated over the course of months and years. Here, we had a few weeks of closed-door testimony and two weeks of public hearings. The allegations against the president continue to change, based on how Democrats view the polls.

By comparison, the Clinton impeachment was preceded by years of investigation into his misconduct beginning during his time as Governor of Arkansas. The Nixon impeachment came after years of House and Senate committee investigations. For President Trump, we have had five days of public hearings. Five days of public testimony is what the Democrats are using to impeach a president.

According to Democrats themselves, we have not heard from the most important witnesses. That is because, for one, Democrats refuse to invite them. Additionally, Democrats refuse to issue subpoenas to witnesses they claim are critical and have refused to go to court to enforce subpoenas for other so-called “critical witnesses”.

Democrats have been willing to enforce other subpoenas in court, but now that they have officially opened an impeachment inquiry, they have stage fright. If they truly believe crimes had been committed, why not issue subpoenas and enforce those subpoenas? We all know the answer. They have to rush to minimize the political damage, but, if they rush, they trample on the precedents and processes of this House. It is a sham — one of their own making. We see from their behavior that politics matter more to Democrats than principles.

The central allegations against the president in this affair — since the beginning — consist of hearsay, feelings, conjecture and presumption upon presumption, while objective evidence points the other way and supports the president.

Additionally, this committee received no evidence supporting the Schiff allegations until yesterday, so the discussion today will be about whether constitutional principles support impeachment based on 300 pages of supposed “facts” we just received — which ignore inconvenient, exculpatory information. I ask unanimous consent to place in the record the six letters my colleagues and I have sent requesting a fair process for the minority, the president and the American people. I have not received responses to any of these letters.

Conclusion:

What are the consequences of the Democrats’ proposed actions? Well, they are extraordinarily dangerous. If presidents can be impeached for partisan policy differences based on presumptions and feelings, not actual evidence, Democrats have profoundly undermined the precedents of this institution.

I think even the speaker recognizes this, which is why she chose to attend the UN Climate

Change summit — taking a flight, oddly enough — rather than pay attention to this sham.

Democrats' miserable record and utter lack of fundamental fairness will doom any articles referred to the Senate, but immense damage will already have been inflicted upon the American people and our political system.

Through this exercise, the American electorate has witnessed Washington's entrenched political and media elites attempt to overturn their will. Next time we go to the polls, the people will ask, "When we exercise our vote next, will our choice again be attacked by the elites and the permanent government?" If the answer is yes, we risk comparison to the fledgling democracies on the receiving end of our foreign assistance funds.

I hope every member of this committee, every member of this House, and every American voter who cherishes our republic and wants to keep it, understands that is what is at stake. As Alexander Hamilton warned us, "the greatest danger is that the decision [on impeachment] will be regulated more by the comparative strength of parties, than by the real demonstrations of innocence or guilt."